ISLAMIC COUNCIL AND THE GULF CRISIS

Convinced that the real reason behind the massive military build-up in the Gulf by America and its allies was neither defence of Saudi Arabia nor liberation of Kuwait, but control of the Gulf oil, perpetuation of Israel's military supremacy in the region and the propping up of the West's puppet regimes in the area, the Islamic Council decided to do everything possible, within the constraints of its means, for the prevention of war and for a peaceful solution of the crisis. The following is a resume of the Council's role in the crisis.

1- The Council contacted leaders of the Muslim community in the UK to discuss the ramifications of the crisis and to decide what stand the community should take. All of the Council's views were agreed and incorporated in a joint declaration issued on behalf of the community. (Please see appendix A).

2= At a large rally on Kashmir held on 9 September 1990 at the Wembley Conference Centre, London, the Secretary General took the opportunity to warn the Muslim people of the grave dangers posed to the Muslim world by the formidable military force that had been deployed in the Gulf by the Western powers and exhorted them to unite as one man and demand its immediate withdrawal as the Iraq-Kuwait dispute was an Islamic issue which must be left to Muslims to resolve. (A copy of this speech is at appendix B).

3- The Council prepared a paper on the United States' strategic aims in the Gulf and the Muslim world, pointing out the real motives and intentions behind the massive military buildup. This paper was distributed widely and well received and was translated and published by several newspapers in the Muslim world. (Appendix C).

4-The Council prepared another paper presenting the Islamic view of the crisis which was also widely distributed and appreciated. This was published by newspapers in the UK, Egypt, Jordan and elsewhere. (Appendix D).

5- The Council established contacts with the heads of Muslim organisations and Islamic movements in Muslim countries concerning the Gulf crisis and the urgent need for action by the Muslim Ummah for the withdrawal of the Western forces from the Gulf.

6- The Secretary General visited Amman, Jordan, in September 1990 and met with the Ambassador of Iraq in Jordan and delivered to him a message for President Saddam Hussain, explaining the Islamic Council's stand on the Gulf crisis. He also met with a group of about 60 eminent personalities including members of parliament, statesmen and journalists from Jordan and other Muslim countries and explained to them the Council's point of view.

7- The Secretary General visited Turkey in October 1990 and addressed a congress held by the Rifa party in Ankara. This meeting was attended by approximately 30,000 people. In his speech, the Secretary General focused on the Islamic approach and stand on resolving the Gulf crisis and condemned the deploymentof Western forces in the Gulf, and called upon Muslim peoples to find an Islamic solution. He urged the Turkish people and government not to allow Turkish soil, which had been the land of the Khalifat for many centuries, to be used by Western powers to attack Iraq. (A copy of this speech is at appendix E).

8- The Secretary General gave several interviews in Turkey on the crisis and emphasised the grave dangers which the deployment of Western forces in the Gulf posed to the Muslim world.

9- The Council, in cooperation with Mr Ahmad Ben Bella, the first president of independent Algeria, had planned to hold a big public rally on the Gulf crisis in Algeria on 11 Septemebr 1990. The rally was to have been chaired by Mr Ben Bella but had to be cancelled as the venue allocated by the Algerian government would not hold more than 200 people whereas the Coucil had expected tens of thousands to attend.

10- The Secretary General lobbied in Paris and communicated the Council's views to President Mitterrand through highly-placed persons close to the president. (Appendix F).

11- The Secretary General sent a message to General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, the Nigerian head of state, through Al-Haj Ibrahim Dasuki, the Sultan of Sokoto, appealing to him that Nigeria oppose the threatened use of force against Iraq.

12- On 22 August 1990 the Secretary General sent a message to Senator Khurshid Ahmad informing him that the Islamic Council intended to hold an international conference on the Gulf crisis in Islamabad. He was requested to approach President Ghulam Ishaque Khan to obtain his permission to hold the conference in Islamabad and his willingness to inaugurate it. Senator Khurshid Ahmad informed the Council that the president was not favourably inclined. (A copy of the Council's message to Senator Khurshid Ahmad is at appendix G).

13- On 31 October 1990, the Secretary General sent a long letter to President Bush presenting the views and stand of the Muslim people concerning the crisis. The aim of this letter was to argue a case that an attack on Iraq by the US-led Western forces would prove to be harmful to the interests of the West, particularly the US, as it would provoke a widespread and violent reaction against America among the Arab and Muslim

peoples. (See appendix H). The reply on behalf of President Bush stated the stereo-type American position (Appendix J).

14- The Council made determined efforts to persuade King Fahd not to allow Saudi soil to be used by the Western powers for an attack on Iraq. The Secretary General sent a cable to King Fahd in October urging him to take an initiative to prevent war and to help solve the crisis by peaceful means. (Appendix K). On 4 November 1990, the Secretary General sent a further cable to King Fahd on the eve of his meeting with the US Secretary of State, James Baker, again pleading with him not to allow the holy land of Islam to be used by Western powers to attack a Muslim country and its people. (Appendix L). On 10 December 1990, the Secretary General sent a letter to King Fahd (appendix N) under cover of a letter to Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz, the Governor of Riyadh,(appendix M) requesting that he deliver the letter to the King personally. On 20 December 1990, the Secretary General sent his third cable to King Fahd, during the visit to Saudi Arabia of the US Secretary of Defence, Richard Cheney, and General Colin Powell, the Chief of the Joint Staff, and once again appealed to him not to be responsible for the destruction of a brother Muslim country by allowing Saudi soil to be used as a launching pad for an attack on Iraq. (Appendix O). On 4 Novemebr 1990 the Secretary General had also written to Prince Salman asking him to use his influence to prevent any decision that would allow foreign

forces to attack the Iraqi Muslim people from Saudi soil. (Appendix P).

15- On 5 November 1990 the Secretary General wrote to Mr Edward Heath, a former British prime minister, congratulating him for advocating that the crisis be solved by diplomacy and not by war. The Secretary General proposed to Mr Heath that he call a meeting of like-minded influential personalities from anywhere in the world to promote this idea, and offered the Council's full cooperation and assistance in organising such a meeting under Mr Heath's chairmanship. (Appendix Q). Mr Heath replied regretting his inability to comply with the Council's suggestion due to time constraints . (Appendix R). The Secretary General wrote again to Mr Heath on 13 Novemebr expressing his disappointment at Mr Heath's reply in view of the urgency of the situation. Mr Heath replied on 28 Novemebr expressing his thanks for the Council's support. (Appendix T. The Secretary General's three letters are at appendix S).

16- The Secretary General wrote also to a number of leading personalities, including heads of government and cabinet ministers, to mobilise opinion against war. Among them: Professor Necmettin Erbakan, a former deputy prime minister of Turkey; Mrs Mary Robinson, the President of Ireland; King Hassan II of Morocco; Mr Tony Benn, Member of Parliament and a former cabinet minister; Mr Ingram Carlson, Prime Minister of Sweden. (Please see appendices U,V,W,X and Y).

17- On 24 November 1990 the Secretary General once again went to Amman and met with Crown Prince Hassan and other important personalities. He put forward to Prince Hassan the Council's plan to hold an international conference in Amman on the Gulf crisis with the aim of building up international opinion in favour of a negotiated peaceful solution. The Secretary General's suggestion, including the inauguration of the conference by King Hussain, was favourably received and he stayed on in Amman for a few days to discuss and finalisee various aspects of the conference. Necessary preparatory work continued in London on the Secretary General's return, but due to certain reasons the conference could not be held.

18- On 9 Janaury 1991 the Secretary General gave an interview to the French Service of the BBC on various aspects of the Gulf crisis, including the conference of Islamic Movements and Muslim Organisations which opened in Baghdad that day. (Appendix Z).

19- On 18 January 1991 the Council sent a message to Professor Necmettin Erbakan expressing grave concern about the use of Turkey's military bases by America to attack Iraq. (Appendix AB).

20- Also on 18 January the Council was approached by the Financial Times and the Observer for its stand on the crisis. (Appendix AC).

21- On 31 January 1991 the Council contacted Qazi Hussain Ahmad, Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan, appreciating the Jamaat's call for the withdrawal of Pakistan's military contingent from Saudi Arabia and urging intensified efforts to this end. (Appendix AD).

22- On 11 February 1991 the Council sent another communication to Senator Khurshid Ahmad, Naib Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan, again urging the Jamaat to do everything possible for the withdrawal of Pakistan's contingent from Saudi Arabia. (Appendix AE).

23- On 21 February, Senator Khurshid Ahmad replied that the Jamaat was pursuing this demand. A conference of world Islamic movements was held and a delegation met with the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan to urge the need of withdrawal. This conference issued a comprehensive communique on issues bearing on the crisis. (Appendices AF and AG).

24- On 19 February 1991 the Secretary General wrote to Mr Denis Healey MP, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer and Minister for Defence, appreciating his firm stand against the invasion of Iraq and his fair and objective views as expressed on TV and in the press. Mr Healey was urged to continue his efforts to defuse the frenzy and salvage the situation as best as possible. (Appendix AH). Mr Healey replied assuring that he

would continue his efforts for a peaceful solution. (Appendix AJ).

25- On 20 February 1991 the Secretary General sent a detailed letter to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, giving reasons why Pakistan must play a pivotal role in the Gulf crisis in defence of seriously threatened Muslim interests, and making a number of suggestions in this connexion. (Appendix AK).

26- On 4 February 1991 the Secretary General wrote to Dr Sabri Tabrizi of the University of Edinburgh to congratulate him for his expert presentation of the Muslim point of view on the crisis on TV and in newspapers and expressed the hope that he would continue the good work. (Appendix AL and Dr Tabrizi's reply appendix AM).

27- In the first week of January 1991, the Secretary General received an invitation to Baghdad but was unable to go.

28-Gravely concerned about the relentless and determined onslaught of the US and British forces aimed at the annihilation of the Iraqi defence forces, the destruction of Iraq's economic structure and its public utility services, and the slaughter of civilian life, the Secretary General wrote on 18 February to Mr Ahmad Ben Bella that every effort be made to salvage what could be salvaged. He said that the 11 UN

conditions linked to Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait should be supplemented by three other conditions: 1) the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the Gulf; 2) the lifting of the blockade and sanctions against Iraq; 3) that the UN resolutions concerning Palestine be implemented. Mr Ben Bella was requested to pass on and clarify these to the responsible authority in Iraq. (Appendix AN, in Arabic).

29- The Secretary General held discussions on the crisis with leaders of the Iraqi opposition in the UK and explained to them why it was necessary for them to oppose the US/UK attacks aimed at destroying Iraq's economic, social and industrial structure. They agreed with the position taken by the Council and expressed their opposition to the on going destruction in statements to the media.

30- On 26 February the Secretary General wrote to Mr Andrew Faulds MP expressing his appreciation and thanks for the views he gave in Parliament concerning the crisis, and hoping that he would continue to defend the truth boldly. (Appendix AN). On the same day the Secretary General also wrote to Mr Paul Foot, a Daily Mirror columnist, praising him for the great moral courage and integrity he showed on a Channel 4 TV programme on 23/24 February. (Appendix AO).